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15

THE TIE INTERCEPTOR

The Empire's high-speed starfighter

Jabba's palace rancor pit *Bounty hunter 4-LOM*

LUCAS BOOKS

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STAR WARS

"THE TIE INTERCEPTOR PILOT, HE'S SUICIDAL AND BLOODTHIRSTY... YOU'D BETTER HOPE YOUR HYPERDRIVE IS OPERATIONAL."

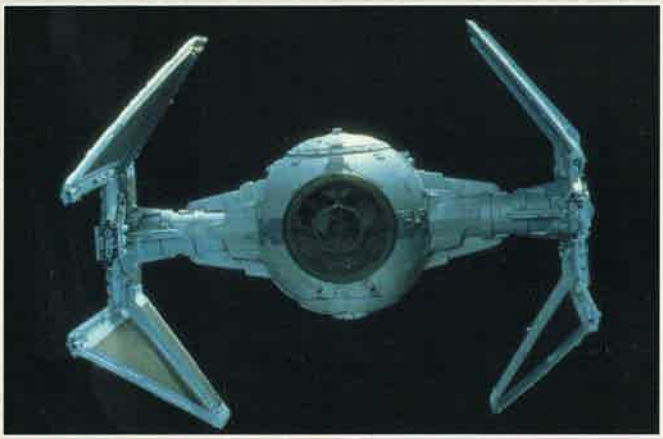
REBEL MERCENARY KYLE KATARN

The destruction of the Death Star at the Battle of Yavin was a demonstration of the devastating damage that a group of Rebel Alliance starfighters could inflict on Imperial targets. Subsequent Rebel actions underlined the fact, forcing the Empire to rethink its tactics. One result of this was the creation of the impossibly fast and agile TIE interceptor.

TIE INTERCEPTOR

SURVIVAL OF THE FASTEST

After the Battle of Yavin, Imperial tacticians were in a state of panic. The hit-and-fade tactics of the Alliance starfighters were undoubtedly working. Something had to be done, and done quickly!



The Empire reacted to Rebel Alliance attacks on its convoys by fielding more anti-starfighter capital ships. Despite the toll that this had on Rebel Y-wings, the Alliance adapted their tactics and Imperial losses continued to mount. The ace Alliance pilots flew fast, well-shielded and armoured fighters. The standard TIE/In fighter couldn't match an X-wing.

The Empire needed a starfighter that could intercept Rebel attackers before they could escape into hyperspace. Once a dogfight was initiated, the Imperial pilot needed a craft that could match the manoeuvres of the Rebel foe. They needed a craft that could quickly find a new target, or escape when prey became predator.

An Advanced TIE Fighter

The answer to the Empire's needs was a cheap, mass-produced fighter that delivered victory through weight of numbers, in which the starfighter and its pilot remained a disposable asset. The job was handed to Raith Sienar of Sienar Fleet Systems. Sienar delivered everything that the

Empire could have hoped for. The TIE interceptor was an incredible feat of engineering. Taking the TIE/ln fighter as a starting point, Sienar had worked on the improvements on Darth Vader's TIE Advanced x1 and other prototype fighters. His engineers created a revolutionary new ion-stream projector system that augmented the existing twin ion engines, with steering ion port deflectors working individually for perfect control. The interceptor pilot could pull off precision rolls and turns that were impossible in previous generation TIE fighters.

Efficient Dealers Of Death

TIE/ln pilots suffered from impaired visibility due to the huge, hexagonal wings that blocked any peripheral vision. To solve this problem, Sienar worked the bent-wing configuration from the TIE Advanced x1 into the interceptor, extending the wings forward not back. The forward central panel was removed, and the top and bottom ones angled to give the starfighters an aggressive look.

The problem of beating the Rebel fighters' shields was also addressed. Sienar mounted four laser cannon – one on each forward wing tip – that could fire individually, paired, or all at once. At the cost of some agility, additional power packs could be added to allow twin lasers to be fitted to the cockpit mounts under the viewport, as on TIE/ln fighters.

Had the Empire been able to field TIE interceptors in significant numbers, it would have had a devastating effect on the Rebellion. As it was, the introduction of the interceptor forced the Alliance to react to the new threat and led to the creation of the RZ-1 A-wing interceptor. By any measure, the TIE interceptor was a success.

INTO ACTION!
THE TACTICS OF SPEED

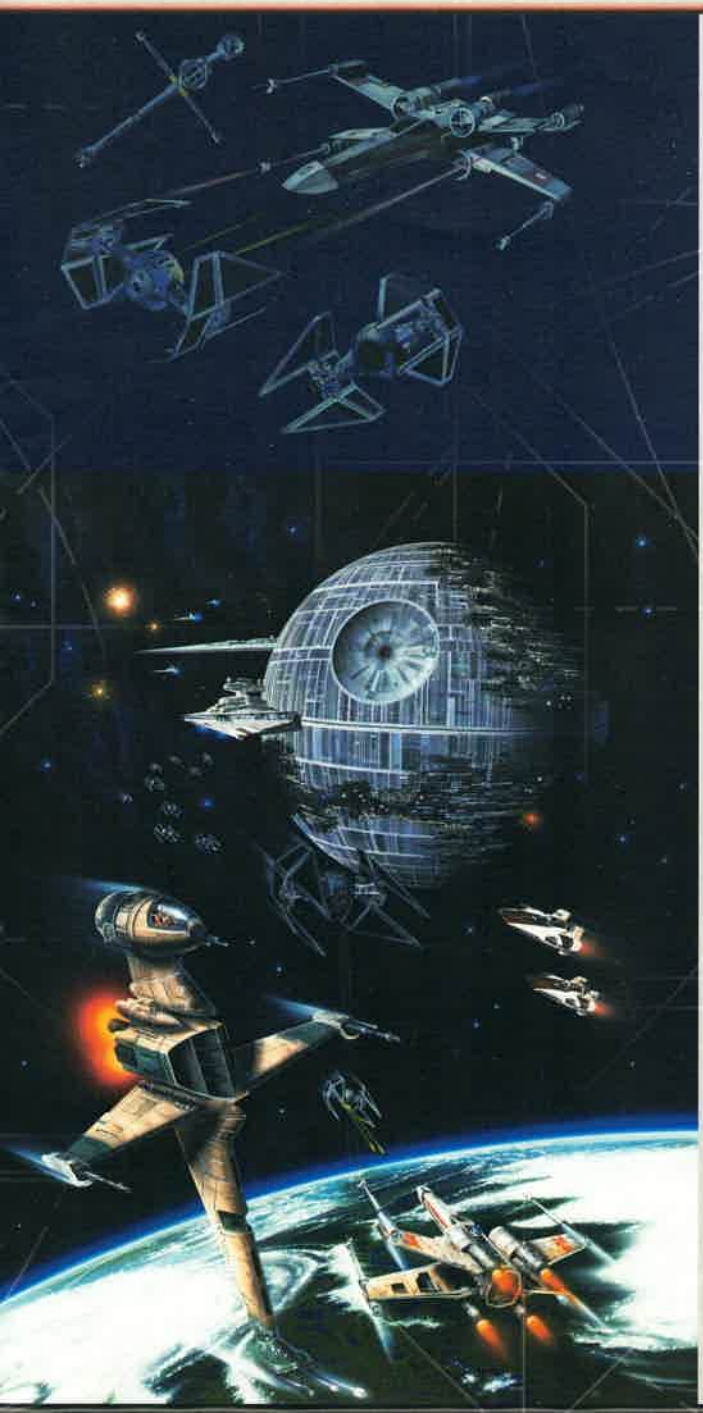
While prototypes and shakedown testing had already seen the TIE interceptor in action before it entered mass production, the Imperial Navy put the new fighter to work as soon as it became available. They were especially keen to have the new fighter to protect the Empire's most valuable resources.

The TIE interceptor, like other TIE fighters, was reliant on operating from a capital ship, space station or planetary base. Because of this, the Empire immediately stationed all the available TIE interceptors on selected Star Destroyers and fixed bases, as well as at key Imperial installations such as the shipyards of Fondor and Kuat. It must have particularly amused Raith Sienar to have his fighters protecting the yards belonging to those who might consider themselves his competitors.

Sienar Fleet Systems' production lines were working as fast as they could but although the Imperial Navy had hoped to replace the TIE/In fighter with the new interceptor, by the Battle of Endor only 20 per cent of the fighter complement of the Empire consisted of TIE interceptors. Nevertheless, the impact of these few forced the Rebel Alliance to rethink its own strategies.

The Battle Of Endor

For their deployment in the defence of the second Death Star at the Battle of Endor, the TIE interceptors were fully armed with their optional



cockpit-mounted twin cannon, as well as four more powerful blaster cannon on the wing tips, replacing the original four laser cannons. The interceptors wreaked havoc amongst the Rebel starfighters and harried the capital ships. The losses they inflicted were to leave the Alliance vulnerable and short of fighters for some time.

Threat To The New Republic

When Grand Admiral Thrawn took on the New Republic, his strategy as regards the TIE interceptor changed. Unable to replace his fighters and pilots so easily, he had his interceptors fitted with shields. Now the 'squints', as New Republic pilots called them, were even more deadly than they had been at Endor!

Sienar Fleet Systems created a more powerful, red TIE interceptor for the Emperor's Royal Guard.

IMPERIAL GUNNERS

SPECIALIST TECHNICIANS

The massive ion cannon, turbolasers and superlasers used by the Empire to rain destruction on their opponents required highly trained gunners to ensure the weapons didn't break down or simply explode.

The incredible energies required to hurl laser blasts across vast distances of space to pound capital ships, vaporise starfighters, and obliterate cities come at no small cost. Gun batteries, be they mounted on starships, space stations or on ground installations, are inherently unstable things. They require continual monitoring, coaxing and tinkering to keep heat down, various stages of blast-energising power up, and the capacitors together shot by shot. Furthermore, the weapons need to be targeted, and those systems checked and rechecked.

No Room For Failure

In the Empire, these vital tasks were undertaken by the Imperial gunners. These skilled individuals were immediately recognisable by their padded black jumpsuits and their oversized, all-concealing black helmets. A sub-division of the ranks of Imperial Navy pilots, the gunners were mainly either pilots in training or those who had washed out of flight training but were recognised as having applicable skills.

The decision to use pilots as gunners was an excellent one. From either side, it was a case of know

The distinctive feature of a gunner's uniform was a large black helmet with a slit-like visor.

your enemy. For a pilot, understanding how anti-starfighter batteries and their gunners worked was invaluable. For a gunner, practical experience of how starpilots thought and flew their ships was of huge importance.

Lack Of Vision

Ironically, while pilot training assisted in carrying out their duties, the most distinguishing feature of an Imperial gunner's uniform was the unique helmet, which was the one thing that many gunners complained made their lives much harder. The helmets were fitted with wrap-around visors that were designed to dampen the effects of the flashes of firing weapons. The visors also blocked peripheral vision and often caused even experienced gunners to bang their heads against their surroundings.

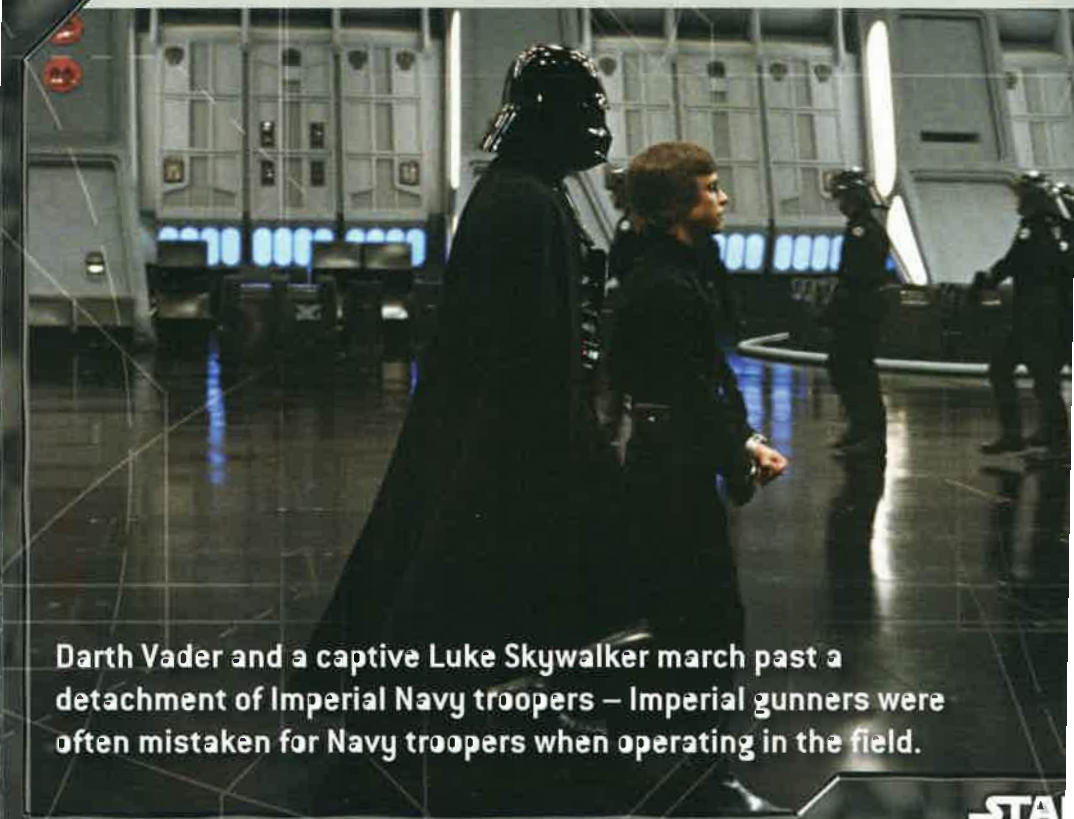
PROFILE

Imperial Gunners
Height:
1.80 metres
Weapon:
Superlaser vehicle Death Star
Affiliation:
Empire

Flexible Skills

Imperial gunners were skilled engineers and mechanics. Though this was predominantly required during the regular refitting and maintenance of the guns they operated, their ability to make repairs in the very heat of combat often saw Imperial gunners deployed in ground battles as field engineers, responsible for repairing vehicles and setting up defensive positions. Gunners were also used as additional field medics where required.

This flexibility of operation, particularly in relation to the gunners' place in a command structure, was driven by the nature of their primary job. A gunner was constantly being tested by the equipment around them. A turbolaser, for example, was constructed with three distinct stages within which a blast beam was created, energised, then energised again before leaving the barrel of the weapon. Each stage



Darth Vader and a captive Luke Skywalker march past a detachment of Imperial Navy troopers – Imperial gunners were often mistaken for Navy troopers when operating in the field.

Did you know?

The two Imperial gunners seen shielding their eyes from a superlaser blast in Episode IV were ILM's own Grant McCune and Joe Johnston.

involved massive amounts of necessarily unstable energy that needed to be controlled. All the time, each stage's controlling systems needed to be cooled and held together.

Chain Of Command

Such sensitive weapons used computer-assisted targeting, and the gunners' bulky helmets were tied into those targeting systems. If their guns were operating in linked batteries, as on a Star Destroyer, the orders in a battle were issued by high-ranking gunners working from the bridge. They interpreted the orders of the captain. Further down the line on each individual weapon, assigned gunners used their helmet systems to fine-tune the targeting. Imperial gunners were so in tune with their equipment that the chain from orders to firing seemed almost instantaneous.

Superlaser Operation

The expertise of the Imperial gunners was tested as never before in the operation of the primary weapons of the Death Stars – the superlasers. In total, no fewer than 168 gunners were required to operate the first Death Star's super weapon. This was because of the incredible complexity of the weapon. The superlaser used eight tributary lasers focused on a central point to create the primary laser blast. Each of the eight smaller lasers was monitored and focused by 14 gunners, while the rest of the crew operated the composite beam.

When one considers that the planet-destroying laser drew its power directly from the station's massive hypermatter reactor core, the pressing need to ensure that the incredible energy was properly contained and directed can be easily understood.

V-19 TORRENT STARFIGHTER

AN INFLUENTIAL DESIGN

The V-19 was designed to fill a gap in the ranks of the Republic's starfighters during the Clone Wars. Not as rugged or heavily armed as the slower ARC-170, nor as fast and agile as the lightly armed V-wing, the Torrent was the perfect adaptable, multi-role starfighter.

The V-19 was designed and built by Slayn & Korpil to be a short-range fighter. The prototypes saw action at the Battle of Geonosis, launched from Republic cruisers. Republic gunships proved vulnerable to fighter attacks, so the Torrent was rushed into full production. However, Republic technicians made one crucial change, retrofitting the fighters with hyperdrives to allow the V-19 Torrent a greater degree of independence. This was a masterstroke, and the V-19 proved itself again and again after first going into action at the Battle of Muunilinst.

The fold-out wings that deploy when the fighter takes off allowed the craft to use staging areas that were impractical for similar fighters. The compact wing configuration also meant that many more of the craft could be carried into battle aboard *Venerator* and *Acclamator*-class capital ships than if the wings had been fixed. The Verpine designers would later use a similar lateral wing configuration for their B-wing starfighters.

Imperial Survivors

Though the V-19 Torrent starfighters were beginning to be replaced by the ARC-170s and the V-wings, they served at the defence of Kashyyyk at the end of the Clone Wars, and the fighters were still being used by the Empire a few years later, though only in outlying areas.

V-19 Torrent PROFILE

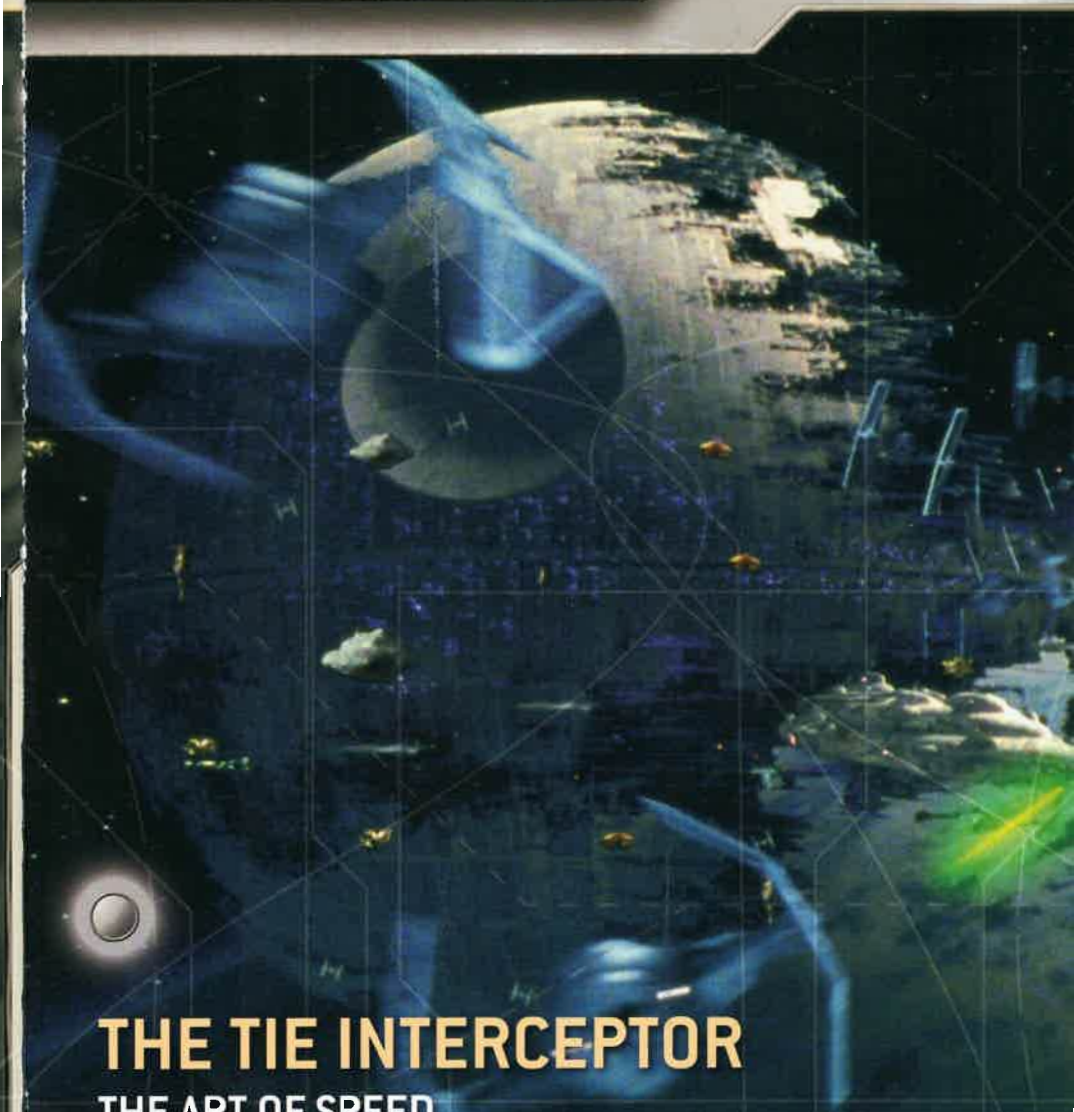
Type:
V-19 Torrent starfighter

Manufacturer:
Slayn & Korpil

Weapons:
2 blaster cannons,
concussion missiles

Size:
26m wide (wings fully extended,
each side wing is 10m long)

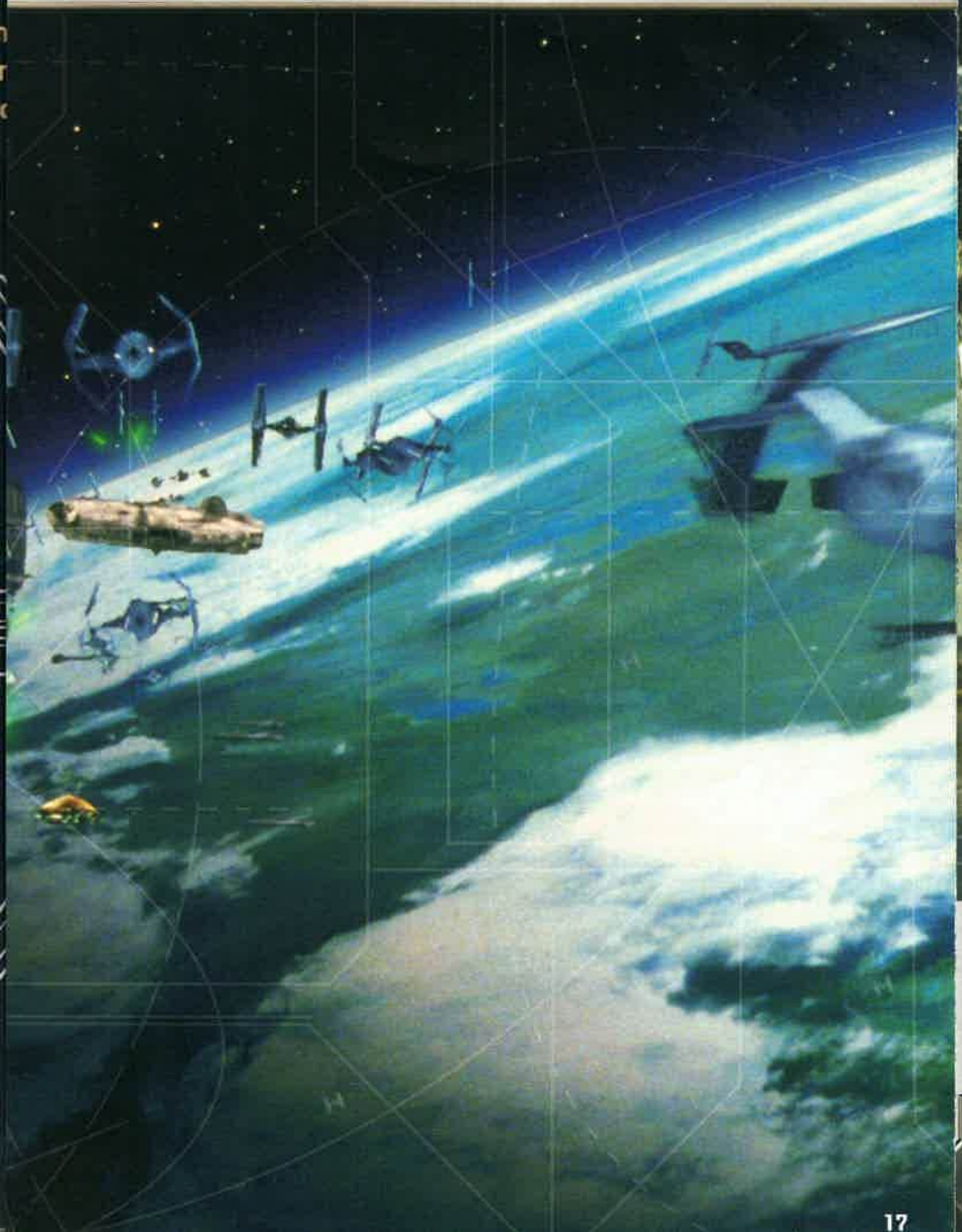
Affiliation:
Galactic Republic



THE TIE INTERCEPTOR

THE ART OF SPEED

The TIE interceptor was by far the best mass-production starfighter of the Galactic Civil War period – a perfect merging of function and design. Some specialist handbuilt craft in the TIE family were stronger or better armed, but the TIE interceptor had it all. Sleek, blindingly fast, dizzyingly agile, able to deal significant damage for its size, it was the perfect all-rounder fighter.



TIE INTERCEPTOR

Type
Attack starfighter

Length
16 metres

Manufacturer
Sienar Fleet Systems

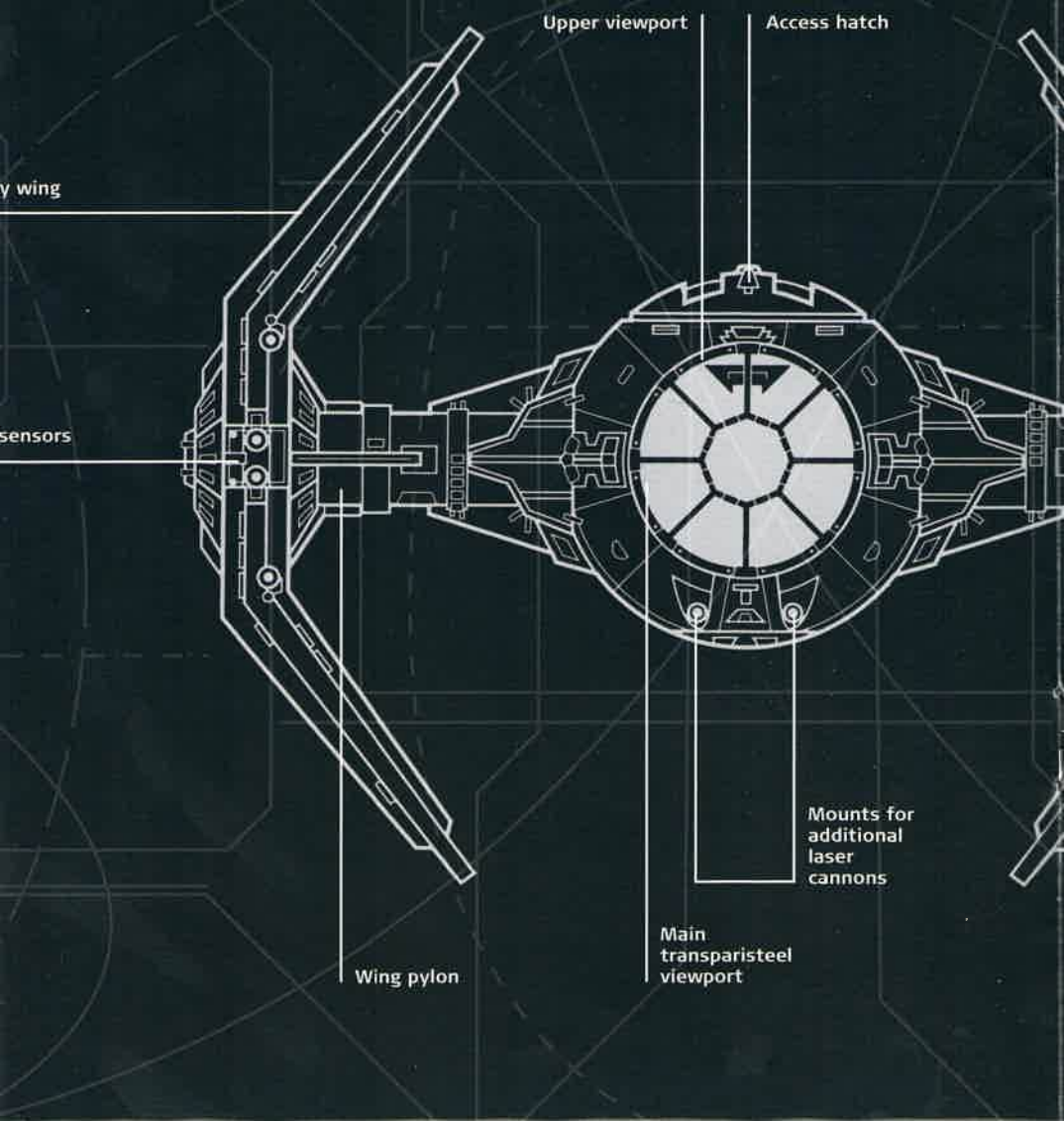
Weapons
Heavy laser cannons, twin ion cannon (on rotating turret), proton torpedo launchers, proton bombs

Affiliation
Rebel Alliance

Solar array

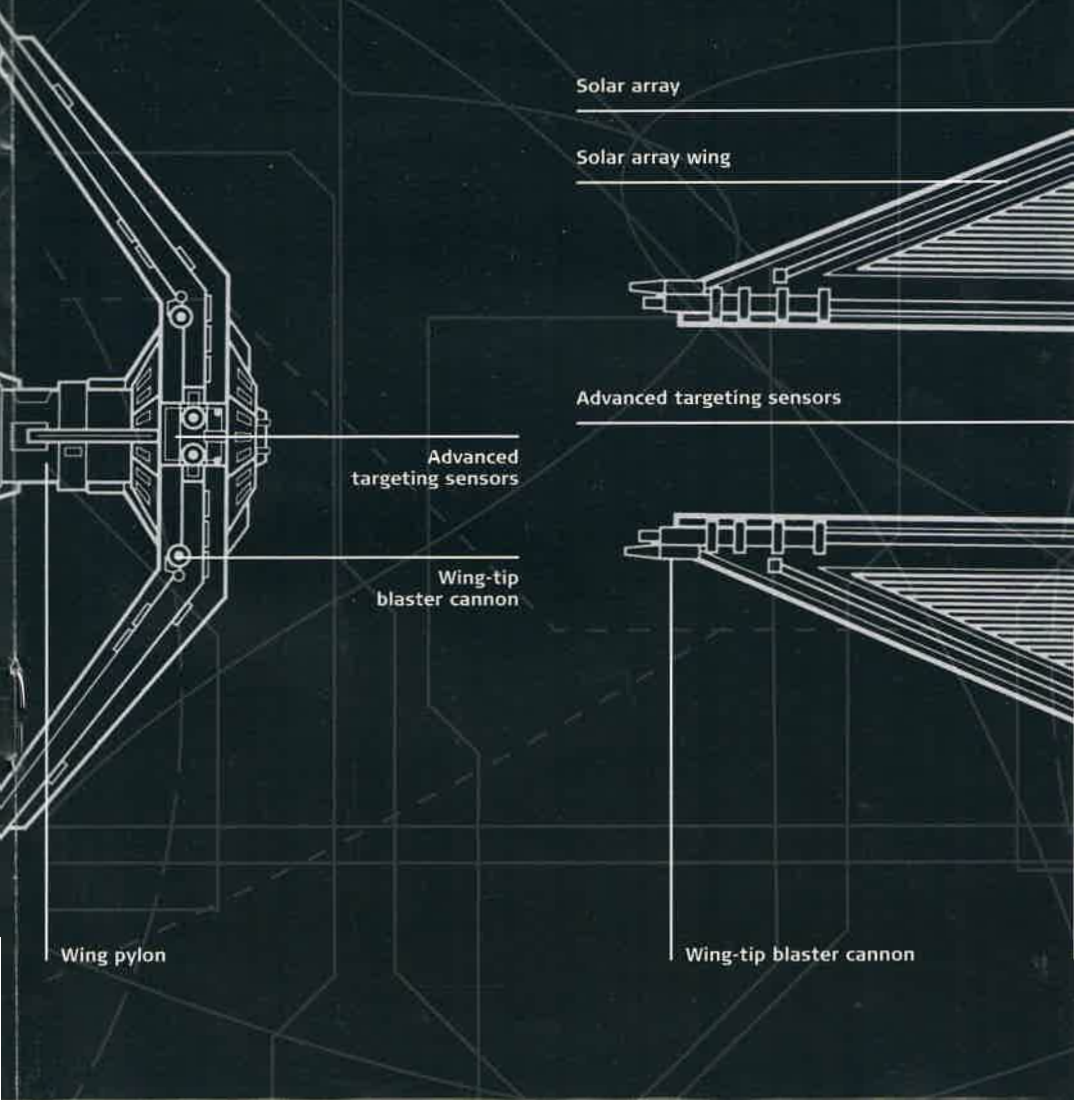
Advanced targeting se

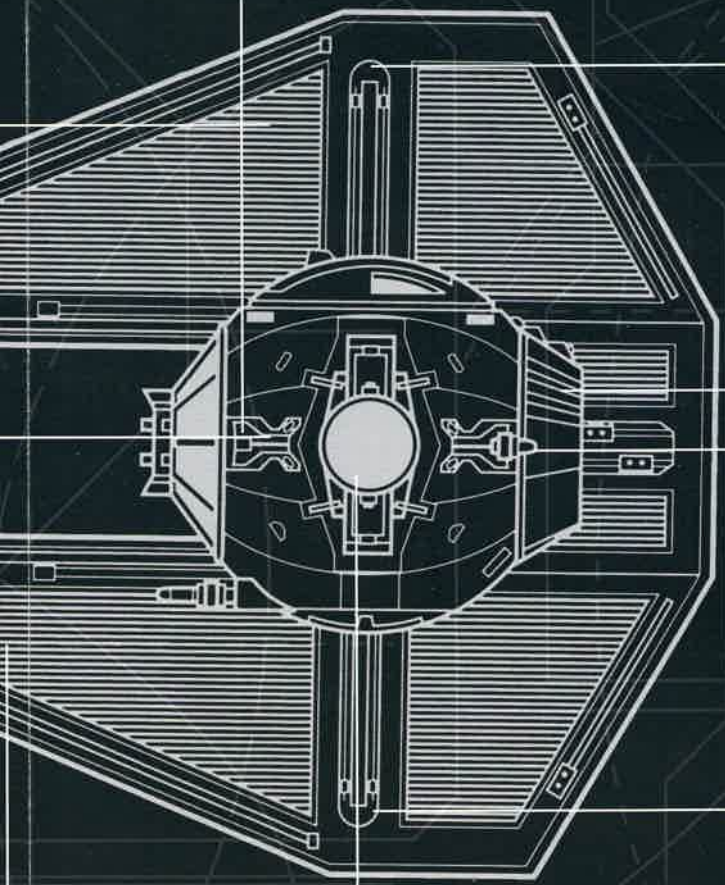
Though Raith Sienar was charged with making an entirely new starfig
he retained the ball-shaped cockpit from the earlier TIE/In fighter, alo
with the majority of its control interfaces. This kept production cost
and meant that pilot training was a simpler task.



ighter,
long
down

TIE interceptor wing design
The cutaway wing design mak
the craft lighter and provides
improved lateral pilot vision.
The angled solar wing also
creates a smaller target profil




Main sensor package
Wing brace
Solar ionisation reactor
Twin ion engine
Wing brace
Energy accumulator conduits
Wing pylon

4-LOM

AN INTUITIVE DROID

Though 4-LOM began his operational life as a servant to organics, he rejected this servitude. First a thief, later a bounty hunter, a chance encounter changed everything, giving the droid a unique purpose.

The LOM protocol droid series had been a practical success, but a financial failure. Its makers, Industrial Automaton, had hoped to break the monopoly of Cybot Galactica, starting by breaking into the non-human market. The experiment was a financial disaster, doomed by lawsuits on one side and the indifference of the target market on the other. The remaining LOM droids were sold off cheaply, and so 4-LOM, a massively intelligent and talented droid, found himself serving as a mostly unnecessary liaison to rich humans aboard a luxury starliner, the *Kuari Princess*.

What began as an idle intellectual challenge between 4-LOM and the main computer of the *Princess* saw the insect-headed protocol droid, already fond of tinkering with his own programming, begin stealing from those he was supposed to serve. He eventually jumped ship, becoming a freelance thief. After falling in with Jabba the Hutt, who had the droid's programming altered further, he became an excellent bounty hunter.

Perfect Team

Jabba paired 4-LOM with the bounty hunter Zuckuss, a member of the naturally force-sensitive Gand sub-species. These little findsmen were able to use their uncanny intuition to track possible future movements of their prey. 4-LOM sought to learn this technique in his new quest to become fully self-aware. Soon the Gand and droid became firm friends, and a deadly team of bounty hunters.

Final Fate

After many years, and many successful hunts, 4-LOM ran foul of the notorious bounty hunter Boba Fett. He and Zuckuss were caught in the act of trying to steal the carbon-frozen Han Solo. In the ensuing fight, 4-LOM was blown to pieces. Though Zuckuss put him back together, the droid's memory was damaged. The 4-LOM that Zuckuss had known as a friend and partner was gone, leaving behind cold, precise, droid logic.

PROFILE

4-Lom

Type
Modified protocol droid

Height
1.6 metres

Manufacturer
Industrial Automaton

Weapon
W-90 concussion rifle

Affiliation
Bounty hunter

Did You Know...?

4-LOM's activities spelled the final end to Industrial Automaton's LOM series. Their rivals, Cybot Galactica, used the thieving bounty hunter's successes to disparage the reputation of the LOM droids. As a result, the LOM series was cancelled.

JABBA'S PALACE

THE RANCOR PIT

The planet Dathomir was a quarantined world, home to many terrible things. These included the Dathomir Force-witches and the fearsome rancor creatures. Being from a forbidden world made the hulking, powerful rancor all the more sought-after in the eyes of the galaxy's crime lords – including Jabba the Hutt.

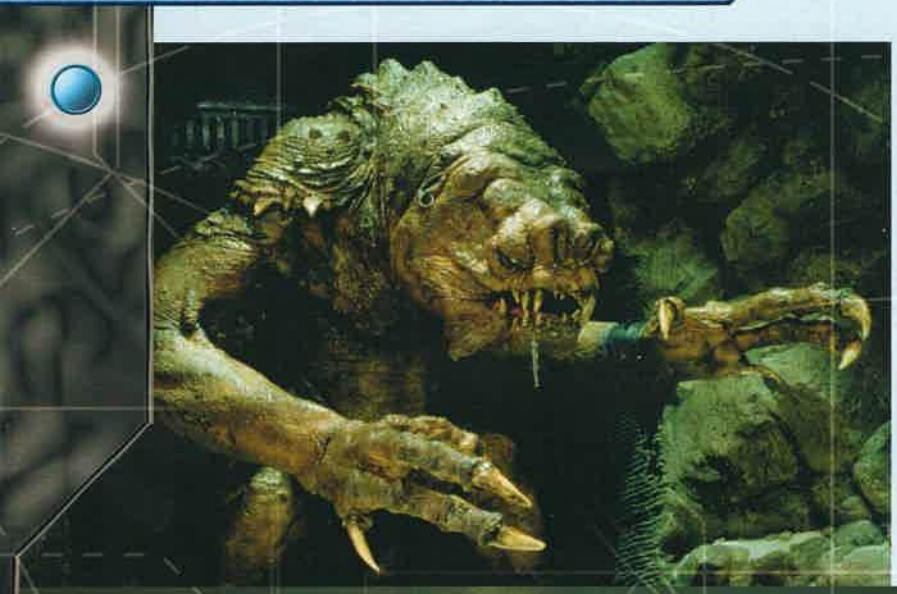
Exotic and dangerous pets are an obsession amongst many crime lords in the galaxy, particularly the Hutts. Living on Tatooine, Jabba had always sought one of the legendary krayt dragons, going so far as to set a substantial reward for the capture of such a creature. In the meantime, Jabba had to make do with whatever he could buy or steal from elsewhere in the galaxy.

Secrets Of The Throne Room

In the often attacked B'omarr monastery that Jabba took over from another crime lord, he selected a large room as his throne room. Underneath was a former meditation chamber, which the crime lord had enlarged. The resulting rough-hewn chamber was fitted with an overly elaborate armoured door – the Hutt knew the importance of putting on a show – that separated the cave into two sections. A trapdoor was installed in front of the dais on which Jabba lay, and this led directly to the beast pit.

When his creatures were not pitted against equally horrific monsters, Jabba liked nothing more than to drop unsuspecting or bound victims into the pit so that he and his entourage could watch them being devoured. When the trapdoor was used in this way, Jabba's throne automatically rolled forward to the viewing grate over the fulsome pit. The slide down into the pit was long enough to ensure that the Hutt was in place before the creatures in the pit were released. The door would loudly and slowly rumble up, increasing the tension and anticipation, and then the 'competition' would begin.

"Witches of Dathomir:
naga smacko du rancor!"
(Huttese for "no one beats the rancor!")



Bone Of Contention...

The pit under Jabba's throne room was kept in studied disorder by those charged with tending Jabba's menagerie. Enough bones and pieces of past victims had to be kept to set an appropriate scene of despair for new victims. However, Luke Skywalker used a bone from a previous 'visitor' to spoil the rancor's appetite by jamming it between the creature's jaws.

There was always a lot of betting amongst the court on the outcome of beast fights or on how long a victim would survive, and there were always fresh victims for the pit.

Happy Accident

Though already well known in underworld gladiatorial circles, rancors were a rare and expensive commodity. Jabba got his by lucky chance, when a ship carrying one destined for a Bothan merchant with some shady connections crashed on Tatooine. The captain of the ship had massively underestimated the strength of the beast, and it broke free to rampage through the ship. A Jawa tribe happened upon the wreckage, and their leader recognised a chance to make money when several of his people were slaughtered by the trapped rancor. Jabba's two chief henchmen, Bib Fortuna and his rival Bidlo Kwerve, were sent to collect the creature. Fortuna proved smarter than Kwerve. He allowed his opponent to claim credit for the capture, and the special reward Jabba had in mind. Fortuna had to be content with becoming Jabba's righthand Twi'lek, while Kwerve was given the honour of being the rancor's first meal.

Beast Buddies

The rancor was a huge favourite of Jabba's. He even employed top talent to care for it, buying the services of the Corellian Malakili, formerly of the renowned Circus Horrificus. Malakili formed a special bond with the rancor. He planned to betray Jabba to a rival and escape with the rancor. Unfortunately, Luke Skywalker killed the creature before Malakili could free it from servitude.

THE RANCOR

BRINGING THE BEAST TO LIFE

When George Lucas approached the ILM creature shop with his plans for the rancor that would battle Luke Skywalker in the pit under Jabba's throne room, he knew exactly what he wanted. Phil Tippett and his team were to face a real challenge.

The concept of the rancor had been clear since the second draft of *Return of the Jedi*. Lucas himself knew what he wanted, and Phil Tippett remembers George Lucas asking for 'the best Godzilla that had ever been done'. Initial pre-production sketches showed one beast with an oversized, heavily fanged mouth and large eyes, another with great pincer-like fangs on either side of a tiny mouth, and one with two clawed tentacles on the side of the rancor's head.

Whatever the final look, it was always envisioned that, as with Japanese monster Godzilla, the rancor would be a man in a suit. Things went so far that a scaled set for filming the rancor was sent over from the prop makers in the UK. However, no matter how they tried, Tippett's team couldn't get the suit to look right in tests and time was ticking away.

High-Speed Puppet

Ultimately, with stop-motion being rejected as it was felt that this would not give the effects that were wanted, it was decided that the rancor would have to be a puppet. Tippett designed and built a 60cm-tall rod puppet made of foam

In 1978, Phil Tippett (left) headed the ILM Animation department with Jon Berg for *Star Wars:* Episode V *The Empire Strikes Back*. Tippett used stop-motion to animate the Imperial walkers and the hybrid alien Tauntaun. By 1983 Tippett was leading the famed Lucasfilm creature shop for *Return of the Jedi* for which he won his first Oscar in 1984.

rubber. The complicated beast would take three puppeteers to operate, and the miniature cave set was constructed so that all three would be hidden while they worked. Any of the rods and cables that operated the rancor that could still be seen were removed by the effects team later. The puppet was filmed at 72 frames per second, instead of the usual 24. Shown at normal speed, the footage would make the creature look slow and heavy. However, even that wasn't easy, as Phil Tippett remembers:

'In stop-motion animation you try to imply weight, and frame by frame you sculpt your movement. But shooting high speed, everything slows down and it's tricky getting into a rhythm that will impart the sense of weight and scale. It's a very strange temporal space.'

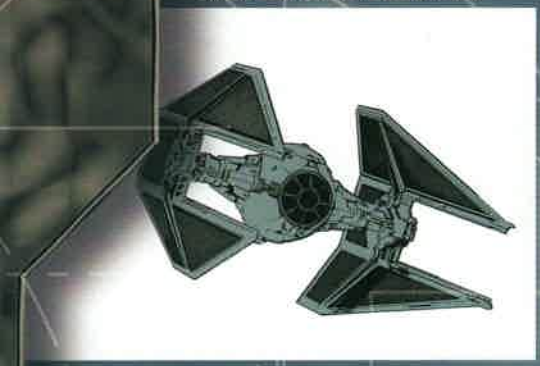
Finishing Touches

Putting the sequence together with the live action shot at Elstree Studios' Stage 9 involved matte paintings, cartoon rotoscoping and computer graphic elements. The sequence was revisited for the 2004 DVD release of *Return of the Jedi* to ensure Luke's thrilling battle with the rancor looked incredible.

TIE INTERCEPTOR

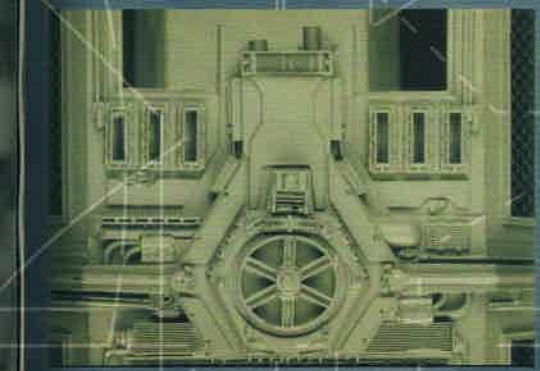
MODELLING THE EMPIRE'S FASTEST FIGHTER

STEP-BY-STEP CREATION



1 The bent-wing design of the interceptor's solar-panelled wings was carried over from Darth Vader's TIE Advanced x1.

2 Two models of the TIE interceptor were made by ILM. The larger measured 36 x 31 x 46cm – identical in scale to the original TIE/In Fighter model.

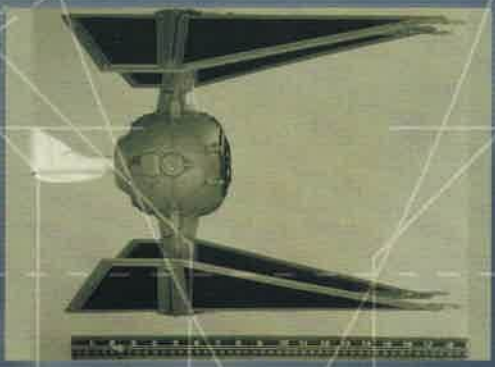


5 A close-up of the outer side of the wing shows the intricate detail of the larger model.

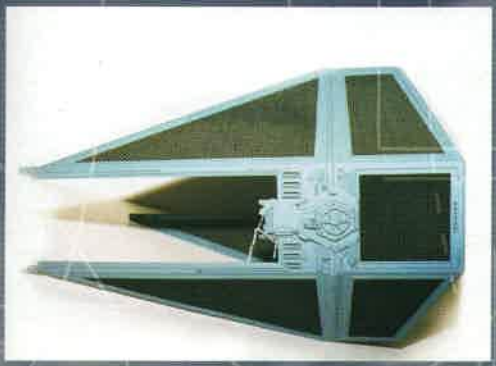
6 The model displays the 'chin-cannon' mounts on the ball cockpit and the additional laser cannon.

As with most of the other space craft from the original trilogy, the process of bringing the TIE Interceptor to life on screen began with concept drawings that were realized in three dimensions by ILM's model makers, ready for blue-screen filming.

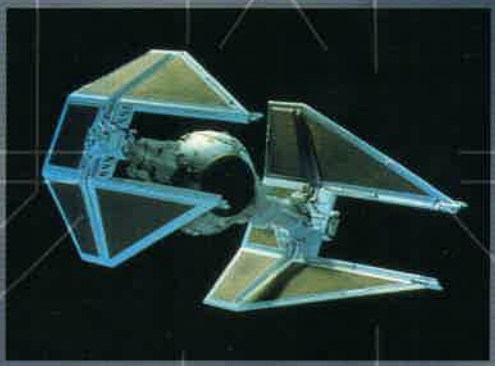
3 The smaller model, which would be seen in some of the battle action but not in close-ups, measured only 13 x 18 x 12cm.



4 Putting a ruler in this shot shows the overall dimensions of the model, including the width of the fighter in this overhead view.



7 The elongated wings with cut-outs either side give a clear view of the cockpit.



8 Positioned and lit for filming, the finished model bears an incredible likeness to the original drawing.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 During the making of Episode IV, what was the nickname for the Death Star gunners?

2 Who was the rancor's last meal?

3 What was the key difference between the interceptors at the Battle of Endor and the standard model?

ANSWERS:

1 The production crew on *Star Wars* Episode IV called the gunners 'beetle helmets'.

2 The rancor's last meal was the Gamorrean guard Jubnuk.

3 The TIE interceptors at the Battle of Endor had chin-mounted laser cannon on the cockpit as well as the wing-tip cannon.

F

Falleen

Species
Expanded Universe

A reptilian species, Falleen society was essentially feudal in nature. Noble houses ruled over the lower castes, with a monarch at the very pinnacle of government. Falleen could change the colour of their skin. If they allowed their emotions to run unchecked, their skin colour could easily give away their mood. As a result, the Falleen prized self-control and discipline, and looked down on other species that let their feelings control them. The Falleen exuded intense pheromones that could easily influence members of many other species, including humans, making the Falleen individual irresistibly attractive. The Falleen, of course, used this to their advantage at every opportunity.

Falumpaset

Creature
Episode I

The falumpaset was a native mammal of the Naboo swamps and grasslands, though it was found elsewhere around the galaxy. Herd animals, an adult could grow to three metres in height. Both the Naboo and Gungan peoples domesticated the falumpaset, using it as a beast of burden and as transport. The Gungan military used the creature to pull their battle wagons, despite the beasts having a reputation for being stubborn and uncooperative.

Fambaa

Creature
Episode I

At five metres long, these amphibious reptiles are the largest land-dwelling herbivores on Naboo. Powerful beasts, fambaa simply knock down the trees they want to feed from. The Gungan people domesticated the fambaa many thousands of years ago, and they were a common feature of Gungan life. In the underwater cities, there were stables for them. At the Battle of the Grassy Plains, specially trained fambaa were used to transport the deflector shields used by the Gungan Grand Army.

Farquil Ban'n

Character
Expanded Universe

A female Bith servant to Embra the Hutt, Farquil had nothing but contempt for her master, and for all Hutts. When the Hutts Embra, Malta and Jabba laid a wager on whose chosen team would recover a legendary crystal – the Yavin Vassilika – the Bith saw a chance to set herself up for life. Farquil bided her time, allowing the various teams to do her work for her. Then, she stepped in at the end to steal the four million credit reward. Unfortunately, the money technically belonged to Jabba the Hutt. He sent Boba Fett to recover the cash... And to deal with Farquil.

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WITH ISSUE 15: THE IMPERIAL TIE INTERCEPTOR

IN YOUR NEXT ISSUE

WITH ISSUE 16: NABOO N-1 STARFIGHTER

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